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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage June 16-18 on the Taipei District Court's decision to detain Eastern Multimedia Group Chairman Gary Wang Sunday night for alleged involvement in a string of embezzlement cases and financial crimes; on the Kaohsiung District Court's decision Friday evening to annul the result of last December's Kaohsiung mayoral election; on the Legislative Yuan's passage of the long-stalled central government budget bill for Fiscal 2007 Friday, which also covers partial funding for the U.S. arms procurements; on the interpretation by the Council of Grand Justices Friday, which confirmed the president's constitutional right to decide what constitutes a state secret and his right to refuse disclosure; and on a serious train collision accident in Yilan County Friday. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a banner headline on page six on June 17 that read "With the Budget Finally Passed, the Three Major Arms Deals Speed up to Catch up with the Schedule." In addition, all papers carried reports on visiting AIT Chairman Raymond Burghardt's roundtable meeting with local journalists Friday and his meeting with the two major presidential candidates - the DPP's Frank Hsieh and the KMT's Ma Ying-jeou - Saturday.

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" op-ed cited the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration's remark that the Cairo Declaration was not a treaty and called on AIT Chairman Burghardt to tell U.S. President George W. Bush to abolish the one-China policy and support Taiwan's bid to join the United Nations using the name Taiwan. An analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" commented on President Chen Shui-bian's request to AIT Chairman Burghardt that the United States reiterate its "Six Assurances." The article said it is President Chen that has been changing all the time and that the Americans will not be taken in any more. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" called on the United States to try to bridge the gap in U.S.-Taiwan relations.
End summary.

A) "Raymond Burghardt, Please Tell George W. Bush"

Shen Chien-teh, former associate professor at National Chung Hsing University, opined in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 500,000] (6/17):

"... Visiting AIT Chairman Raymond Burghardt also said the United States does not support Taiwan's participation in international organizations for which statehood is a requirement. But now the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration has already exposed the fact that, according to the U.S. federal regulations regarding archives, the 'Cairo Declaration' was not a treaty. [We] thus want to ask Burghardt to tell [U.S. President George W.] Bush when he returns to the United States that he should no longer be kept in the dark but should abolish the one-China policy and support Taiwan's bid to join the United Nations as a new member using the name Taiwan."

B) "Bian Has Been Changing All the Time, Americans Will Not Be Taken in Any More"

Journalist Lu De-yun noted in an analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (6/16):

"President Chen Shui-bian's campaign to push for Taiwan's bid to join the international organizations using the name Taiwan has caused concerns from the United States. Sources quoting high-ranking officials of the Bian administration said that AIT Chairman Raymond Burghardt's visit to Taiwan this time was closely related to [Chen's moves]. Just as expected, Chen asked Burghardt during the latter's visit Thursday to clarify [Washington's] position with regard to former President Ronald Reagan's Six Assurances made in 1982. But Burghardt did not directly respond to Chen's request.

"The fact that Burghardt chose to have a face-to-face discussion with local and foreign journalists in Taipei Friday also indicated something unusual. He spent an hour and let the journalists ask whatever questions they wanted. Such a move fully showed that Burghardt wanted to convey the U.S. position and concerns publicly to the Taiwan people and those 'who are interested in knowing,' not just 'speaking something incomprehensible' to Taipei's Presidential Office alone. ...

"Such a way of not responding [directly] to the question has a flavor of 'your words against mine.' Regarding Chen's repetition of the 'Four Nos' pledge he made when he was inaugurated in 2000, [particularly] after he has substantively violated the 'Four Nos'

pledge many times, it fell on deaf ears with the Americans. ... Chen questioned the Americans whether the Six Assurances have been changed, but it is basically Chen himself who has been changing all the time."

C) "U.S. Needs to Bridge Gap in Taiwan Ties"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taiwan News" [circulation: 20,000] editorialized (6/18):

"In his meeting with American Institute in Taiwan Board Chairman Raymond Burghardt last Thursday, President Chen Shui-bian expressed deep concern over whether the Republican administration of U.S. President George W. Bush has altered the commitment of the United States government to the so-called 'six assurances' of July 1982. In particular, Chen asked Washington to offer, at an appropriated time, an open reaffirmation of its commitment to the fifth of the six assurances given by then U.S. president Ronald Reagan that the U.S. "had not altered its position on the sovereignty of Taiwan. Coincidentally, in a Congressional hearing the same day, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for East Asia and the Pacific Richard Lawless accused the People's Republic of China of 'changing the status quo' in the Taiwan strait through its rapid buildup of ballistic missiles aimed at Taiwan and thus became the first U.S. official to openly confirm that the PRC's military expansion had unilaterally altered the cross-Strait status quo.

"Besides illustrating the complicated nature of U.S.-Taiwan relations, these two statements in Washington and Taipei have shown the urgent need for leaders in both capitals to engage in a more candid, cooperative and constructive dialogue in the next nine months in the run-up to Taiwan's next presidential election. ... The obsession of some Washington analysts with their claim that President Chen's Democratic Progressive Party administration is driving for 'legal Taiwan independence' has blinded them to the gravity of Beijing's diplomatic maneuvers which not only aim to exclude Taiwan's participation in international organizations but more aggressively aim to 'legalize' a status for Taiwan that is officially subordinate to the PRC. The official U.S. position toward Taiwan and China is to oppose any unilateral change by either side to the 'status quo,' although U.S. officials habitually use this phrase only after the Taiwan government has acted in a manner perceived to be aggravating the PRC. ...

"We are gratified to finally see public recognition by the Bush administration that the PRC's military threats against Taiwan

constitute an explicit move to 'change' the status quo, but we also believe that more than words are needed from Washington to remedy the damage done to Taiwan's international status and security. ... Moreover, Washington's apparent preoccupation with whether the DPP government would attempt to alter the status quo has provided cover for substantial actions by the PRC which have indeed actually "unilaterally changed the status quo" in a dangerous direction. A balance needs to be struck through more and better dialogue, the importance of which has regrettably not been recognized sufficiently by the two sides so far and which is impeded by Washington's disinclination to allow direct dialogue between Bush or senior Bush administration officials and the DPP government.

"Leaders of the Taiwan and U.S. governments should refocus on the fundamental commonality of interests and cease exaggerating the differences before it is too late. In a recent speech in Prague, Bush himself offered a direction for Taipei and Washington to rethink their bilateral relationship by citing both South Korea and Taiwan as examples to show that the U.S. can maintain a friendship and push a nation toward democracy at the same time. If Bush is serious about his rhetoric, he should display his appreciation for the hard work of the Taiwan people in increasing democracy on the island and resisting annexation by an authoritarian state by offering greater support for Taiwan in the international arena and by actively opposing the PRC's drive to 'legalize' its claim of sovereignty over Taiwan in international organizations."

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